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Some Aspects of the Farmers' Problems

By BERNARD M. BARUCH

(Reprinted from Atlantic Monthly)

Continued from yesterday

Now, what is the farmer asking? Without trying to catalogue the remedial measures that have been suggested in his behalf, the principal proposals that bear directly on the improvement of his distributing and marcering relations may be summarized as

First: storage warehouses for cotton, wool, and tobucco, and elevators for grain, of sufficient capacity to meet the meximum demand on them at the peak of the marketing period. The farmer thinks that either private capial must furnish these facilities, or the state must erect and own the elevaes and warehouses.

Second: weighing and grading of agricultural products, and certification thereof, to be done by impartial and disinterested public inspectors (this is strendy accomplished to some extent by the federal fleensing of weighers and graders), to eliminate underpaying, over harging, and unfair grading, and to facilitate the utilization of the stored products as the basis of credit. Third; a certainty of credit sufficient

o enable the marketing of products Fourth: the Department of Agriculture should collect, tabulate, summa

rize and regularly and frequently pubish and distribute to the farmers full information from all the markets of the world, so that they shall be as well buyers now are of their buying post-

Fifth: freedom to integrate the bushness of agriculture by means of consolidated selling agencies, co-ordinating and co-operating in such way as to put the farmer on an equal footing with the large buyers of his products. and with commercial relations in other ndustries

When a business requires specialized talent, it has to buy it. So will the farmers; and perhaps the best way for them to get it would be to utilize some of the present machinery of the largest established agencies dealing in farm products. Of course, if he wishes, the farmer may go further and engage a flour milling and other manufactures of food products. In my opinion however, he would be wise to stop short of that. Public interest may be opposed to all great integrations; but n justice, should they be forbidden to he farmer and permitted to others? The corporate form of association can not now be wholly adapted to his oblects and conditions. The looser co perative form seems more generally mitable. Therefore, he wishes to be free, if he finds it desirable and feaslble, to resort to co-operation with his fellows and neighbors, without run-ning afout of the law. To urge that the farmers should have the same liberty to consolidate and co-ordinate their peculiar economic functions. which other industries in their fields enjoy, is not, however, to concede that any business integration should have egislative sanction to exercise monoplistly power. The American people ero as tempt aumosed to Indian sutocracy, whether at

rural or by urban industry. of united effort the farmers is a whole are still marketing their is antiquated methods, or by no at all, but they are surrounded ess world that has been d to the last minute and is striving for efficiency. This efficiency is due in large measure to olg towness, to united business, to inbusiness. The farmers now herelits of such largeness unon and integration

the use of labor saving crides in recent years in scientific Illage and efficient farm management ut as a legshoos in contact with other chay" in competition with high power automobiles. The American farmer is adividualists While industrial protuction and all phases of the huge coma have actimilated and co-ordi and themselves all the way from natral raw materials to retail sales, the business of agri ulture has gone on in much the one man fashion of the backwoods of the first part of the nine teenth century, when the farmer was self sufficient and did not depend upon, or care very much, what the great world was doing. The result is that the agricultural group is almost as much at a disudvantage in dealing with other economic groups as the jay farmer of the funny pages in the hands of sleek urban confidence men, who sell him screage in Central Park or the Chicago city half. The leaders of the farmers thoroughly understand this, and they are intelligently striving to integrate their industry so that it will he on an equal footing with other bust-

As an example of integration, take the steel industry, in which the model s the United States Steel Corporation, with its iron mines, its coal mines, its lake and rall transportation, its ocean essels, its by-product coke ovens, its plast furnaces, its open hearth and Dessemer furnaces, its rolling mills, its tube mills and other manufacturing processes that are carried to the highest degree of finished production compatible with the large trade it has will up. All this is generally conceded to be to the advantage of the consumer. Nor does the steel corporation operated, the farmers will have in the market. On the contrary, it so

acts that it is frequently a stabilizing scuence, as is often the case with oth ~ large organizations. It is master of Its distribution us well us of its pro-

duction. If prices are not satisfactory the products are held back or production is reduced or suspended. It is not market at one time and take whatever it can get under such rircumstances. It has one selling policy and its own export department. Neither are the grades and qualifies of steel determined at the caprice of the buyer, nor does the latter hold the scales. In this single integration of the steel corneration is represented about 40 per cent of the steel production of America. The rest is mostly in the hands of a few targe companies. In ordinary times the atesi corporation, by example, stabilizes all steel prices. If this is permissible (it is even desirable, because stand and fair prices are essential to soil and continued prosperity) why would it be wrong for the farmers to utilize central agencies that would have sha for effects on agricultural products?

Some farmers favored by regional compactness and some guite, such as the citrus-fruit raisers of California, al ready have found a way legally to merge and self their products integrally and in accordance with seasonal and local demand, these improving their position and rendering the con-sumer a reliable service of ensured quality, certain supply, and reasonable and relatively steady nelces. They inve not found it necessary to resort to any special privilege, or to visit any exemption under the anattrus legislation of the state or nation. With art removing found control, they have built up a very efficient parcheting The grain, cotton, and to bucco farmers, and the producers of hides and wood, because of their namhers and the vastness of their regions and for other reasons, have found integration a more difficult task

Something like that is what they are

hough there are now some thousands warehouses, creameries, and other enterprises of one sort and mother, with They are giving the farmers business. experience and training and so far as they go, they most the need of ionest weighing and fair-grading churthey do not meet the requirements of canionally adjusted marketing in any arge and fundamental way

The next step, which will be a putern for other groups, is now being repared by the grain-raisers through be establishment of sales media which ectively, as the individual farmer on deer. It is this step—the plan of the beautities of Seventeenreated so much appealtion and hought by some to be in conflict with soc, when you reed music for he anti-trust laws. Though there is signed to clear up doubt on this point the grain producers are not relying on my immunity from anti-trust legisla thon. They desire, and they are enonnection with the selling ions the United States Graft incorporated is drafting a scheme financing instrumentalities and auxil a the successful utilization of moder

It is essential that the farmer should proceed gradually with the places, and aim to avoid the error of rapping the existing marketing on hinery, which has been so lab built up by long experience, before they have a tried and proved subst ute or supplementary mechanism They must be careful not to become enmosted in their own reforms an ise the perspective of their place the nutional system. They must guar against fauntical devotion to new doc trines, and should seek acticulation with the general economic system rather than its reckless destruction as it relates to them.

To take a tolerant and sympathetic view of the farmers' strivings for bet ter things is not to give a blanker endorsement to any specific plan, and still less to applicate the vagaries of Neither should we, on the other hand allow the froth of bitter agitation false re-mounts, and mostaken radica ism to conceal the facts of the farm ers' disadvantages, and the practicabil ity of eliminating them by well-con sidered measures. It may be that the farmers will not show the business sagacity and develop the wise leader ship to carry through sound plans; but that possibility does not justify the obstruction of their upward efforts, We, as city people, see in high and spollage, waste, scarcity, the results of defective distribution of farm products. Should it not occur to us that we have a common interest with the farmer in his attempts to attain a degree of efficiency in distribution corresponding to his efficiency in produc tion? Do not the recent fluctuations in the May wheat option, apparently unrelated to normal interaction of supply and demand, offer a timely proof of the need of some such stabl izing agency as the grain growers have in contemplation?

It is contended that, if their proposed organizations be perfected and inconsiderately dump its products on their hands an instrument that will be capable of dangerous abuse. We are

It to arbitrary and oppressive prices fixing from its legitheate use of ordering and stabilizing the flow of farm products to the market; to the market beneat of producer and consumer. I have no apprehensions on this point;

In the first place, a horse organization, such as any union of farmers must be at best, cannot be so arbitrarily and promptly controlled as a great corporation. The one is a lumbering democracy and the other an agile autocracy. In the second place, with [all possible power of org nightlon, the farmers cannot succeed to any great extent, or for any considerable lenof time, he fixing prices. The grea law of supply and demand works I attempt to full it. In the third place their power will avail the farme gothing it is be aboved. In our ris and country power food value to abused. It is fair to say that I have of a disposition to dictate prior There seems, on the contrary, to be a a stability that will give an orderly and abundant flow of farm products and dependable returns to the pre formation of the pre-

In examining the agricultural situa tion with a view to its improvement rain a detached and judicial glewpoint remembering that existing wrongs may be chiefly an accident of unsymmetri cal economic growth instead of a creation of malevident design and consider ey. We Americans are prone, as Profester David Freday well says in his admirable book, "Profits, Wares and Prices," to seek a "criminal intent be nomic situation." I can positively as sert from my contact with men of large affairs; including bankers, that as a whole they are endeavoring to fulfill as they see them the obligations that go with their power. Preoccupie with the grave problems and fears tusks of their own immediate affairs they have not turned their to include personal attention or their constinu tive abilities to the deficiencies of part cultural business organization: Agrirespond to the farmers' difficulties

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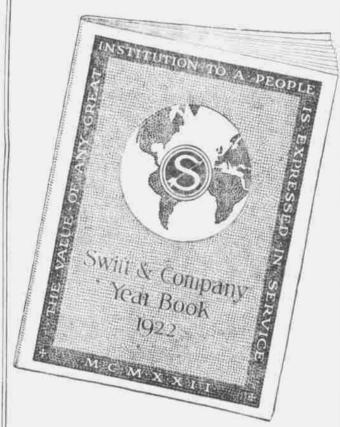
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